

Safety On The Road

Weather Is The Wild Card

Be prepared at all times for weather changes affecting your driving safety. Weather changes can quickly alter road conditions and visibility. You can drive around a corner and suddenly find your vehicle skidding across invisible ice which has accumulated in a shaded area. You can be cruising along and wonder where the scenery went – it is shrouded by thick fog.

A good driver prepares himself for all driving conditions he might encounter. He maintains his vehicle to handle all types of weather. He also learns to anticipate driving conditions by being aware of weather changes.

Here are some reminders for winning against the weather:

- Tune in to radio and television reports describing road and weather conditions. That helicopter hovering over the freeway during morning rush hour can give you good information about icy areas to avoid.
- When planning a trip out of the local area, telephone ahead for highway and weather reports. You might be advised to carry chains to cross a mountain pass, or learn that a route is closed altogether.
- Equip your vehicle for the conditions you might drive through. Don't wait until the first snowfall to install your winter or all-season tires. It's safe to assume it is going to snow this winter, just like every winter before.
 - Also switch to winter weight oil and winter coolant before freeze-up.
 - Carry survival supplies in case you get stuck. Warm clothing, boots, gloves, quick energy food, matches and a candle are the minimum to carry in your vehicle in all seasons.
 - Have the position of your headlights, tail lights and fog lights checked before the cold or rainy season. If they are too low, you won't see much; if they are too high, they can cause potentially dangerous glare for other drivers.
 - Learn how your vehicle handles in rough weather conditions. Front wheel drive, rear wheel drive and all wheel drive vehicles each have a different "feel" to them. Learn how to correct a skid before it happens for real.
 - Get used to your anti-lock brakes before you need them in an emergency. Read the owner's manual for your vehicle, which will explain you can hit them hard without pumping them if you need to stop suddenly.
- Wet weather can cause landslides, and avalanches are common hazards in many regions in the winter and spring. Obey all warnings about avoiding these areas.
- Sometimes road and weather conditions are too extreme to drive at all. If the highway patrol tells you to stay off the road because of a blizzard, do everyone a favor and obey.
- Flood warnings are other good reasons to stay home. Every year there are tragic reports of drivers who tried to drive across flooded roads and were drowned.
- On the other end of the weather scale, severely hot and dry weather poses dangers to travelers in the form of fires in forests and grasslands. Smoke reduces visibility for highway drivers. There is always the risk of being trapped by fire, especially when traveling off the main roads, so stay away from areas where fires are burning. Report fires immediately.

Wild weather adds to the challenge of driving safely. Be aware of weather patterns so you can stay off the road in extreme conditions. Watch continually for changes in road surfaces and visibility which accompany sudden weather changes.

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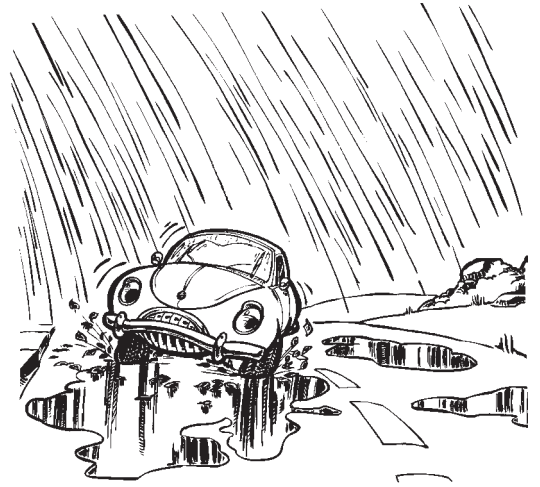
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